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ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY, AT THE
NATIONAL CHILD RESEARCH CENTER

A radio conversation between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Mrs. Adelia Boynton Heiney, Director of the National Child Research Center, Washington, D. C., and Mr. John Baker, Office of Information, broadcast Thursday, July 28, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

--ooOoo--

JOHN BAKER:

Today Ruth Van Deman has brought a guest - Mrs. Adelia Boynton Heiney, the Director of the National Child Research Center here in Washington. As many of you know, this is one of the organizations that cooperates with the Bureau of Home Economics in studying the nutrition, and feeding, and clothing, and so on, of young children. So we've been having a lively discussion here about nursery schools. And how to train youngsters not to be food fussers - - -

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

You mean you and Mrs. Heiney have.

BAKER:

I'm sorry, Ruth, I didn't mean to - - -

VAN DEMAN:

I'm having a grand time listening to the parent and the child specialist. You're much better than one of those high falutin panels at an education conference. Go right ahead.

BAKER:

I'm afraid Mrs. Heiney and I agree too well to make a really good argument.

ADELIA B. HEINEY:

Well, it's a pleasure for me to find a parent who doesn't have to be converted to the nursery school idea.

BAKER:

That's what comes from marrying a home economist.

HEINEY:

I see. Did she teach in a nursery school?

BAKER:

Well she had some exposure to nursery schools. So we're going to send our youngster to a nursery school just as soon as he's big enough.

HEINEY:

And how old, did you say, is he now?

(over)

BAKER:

Seventeen months.

HEINEY:

He's almost old enough. We take some children at 18 months.

BAKER:

Isn't that a little bit young?

HEINEY:

Perhaps. Most of the children we have now in the nursery school are from 2-1/2 to 5 years. Then of course we divide them up into different age groups.

BAKER:

What happens to the 5- to 6-year olds, who are too young to get into the first grade in school?

HEINEY:

In winter we have a kindergarten for them, just a small group so the teacher can give personal attention to each child and help him develop whatever abilities he may have, just as soon as they begin to show themselves.

BAKER:

That's very much the idea of the whole nursery school movement, isn't it?

HEINEY:

Yes, that and to help children to learn early to get along with each other.

BAKER:

Without sacrificing too much of the rugged individualism.

HEINEY:

I think you'll see plenty of rugged individualists running about when you come out to the school. We let each group set its own standards of what's right and what's wrong, in other words fight their own battles, just as much as we can. Of course if discipline is necessary there's always a teacher on hand.

BAKER:

Tell me this, Mrs. Heiney, in a long rainy spell such as we've been having, it must take a good deal of diplomacy and maybe some discipline to keep 14 youngsters happy together.

HEINEY:

Not so much as in wintertime. Then everybody has to struggle with warm playsuits and mittens ---

BAKER:

And cold fingers.

HEINEY:

But these rainy days have been so warm, that the children could wear their little one-piece summer suits, just as though they were in the sand pile.

BAKER:

And go barefooted I suppose.

HEINEY:

No, we do require sandals, and socks to keep the sandals from rubbing blisters. I think it's a risk for children to run around barefooted. They are likely to stub their toes and run splinters in their feet, and bruise them, and cut them on sharp rocks. And sometimes they step on bees and wasps and get stung.

BAKER:

I'm sure that's all very sound reasoning, Mrs. Heiney; but you know there's something about the feel of sand oozing up between the toes ---

HEINEY:

Yes. I know. Perhaps there'll be a chance for that on a smooth sandy beach.

BAKER:

Of course you do have regular sand piles for the children to play in.

HEINEY:

Oh yes. Several. Paint and sand I think are the two greatest entertainers for children in summer. Even an 18 months-old child will amuse himself for hours with a can of water and a paint brush.

BAKER:

You mean just plain water?

HEINEY:

Yes, just plain water. With that he can "paint" the steps and the seats in the swings, and all sorts of things. Very soon he begins to notice that the water on them makes the color different. The 2- and 3-year olds have water-color paints and big sheets of paper. They make pictures. We sometimes have 12 children around the grounds busy with paint and brush.

BAKER:

All belonging to the surrealist school of art, no doubt.

HEINEY:

Yes. Some of the effects they get are truly startling. But in every group there are some children who have a real knack for picture making.

And speaking again of the sand pile, when the weather's dry, we always sprinkle one part of the sand so as to keep down the dust and so it will be wet enough to build tunnels with and mold cakes in old muffin tins.

BAKER:

That sounds like a good idea.

HEINEY:

It is. Old worn-out kitchen utensils are the best sand playthings, I know. Old kitchen strainers, they can sift the sand through. Empty coffee and cocoa cans. A leaky coffee pot. Wooden spoons. Old saucepans.

BAKER:

Certainly they're large enough for a child to get hold of.

HEINEY:

And so large he isn't tempted to put them in his mouth.

BAKER:

That's right too.

HEINEY:

We just watch that there are no sharp edges that the children can scratch themselves on.

Then when the children have finished their time in the sand pile, we have a big bushel basket that they drop their playthings into. And we carry that up to the back porch to keep things from rusting.

BAKER:

Very practical, and orderly.

HEINEY:

We do try to develop a sense of order and care of one's belongings.

BAKER:

But without being possessive.

HEINEY:

That's right. Every toy and plaything in the school belongs to the group, not to any one child, except when he's using it. But each child does have his own washcloth and toilet articles, of course, marked with his symbol. And he's taught to use only his own in those things.

Something else children find very entertaining is a dress up box.

BAKER:

For play acting?

HEINEY:

Well, long before they get to that stage. Even a 2-year old loves to play with an old silk stocking. He'll pull it on and take it off his arm, or his leg, over and over again.

BAKER:

And I suppose that's really helping him develop muscle coordination.

HEINEY:

In a perfectly natural, easy way, yes. The 4- and 5-year olds have dress up parties --- Mother going shopping; Father making a garden; and so on ---

They're dramatizing adult life. Always at the school we have a box of discarded clothes of grownups, and let the children do with them as they please. First we cut off all the sharp buckles and small buttons, of course. And instead of giving them safety pins to pin up the long skirts with, we let them tie cords around the waist and blouse the upper part over. Safety pins are too likely to be held in the teeth and the first thing you know they're swallowed.

BAKER:

I can see, Mrs. Heiney, you belong to the Safety First Council.

HEINEY:

We do try to think of all the possibilities before hand. But of course we have our surprises.

BAKER:

That's one thing you can be sure of with youngsters - surprises. Mrs. Heiney, one of the fine things about your rules is that they fit the home as well as the nursery school.

HEINEY:

That's what a nursery school's supposed to do, of course. To keep an informal, homelike atmosphere ---

BAKER:

With the right psychological approach. Isn't that speaking the language?

HEINEY:

Perfectly.

VAN DEMAN:

And I thank you both for a perfectly delightful seven minutes. Since you didn't get around to the food question, Mrs. Heiney, we invite you here and now, to come and tell us how you deal with the food fussers.

HEINEY:

I'll be glad to. If we could just catch them early enough there wouldn't be so many food fussers.

VAN DEMAN:

Does the proud parent hear that?

BAKER:

He does. And craves more information.

HEINEY:

We always suggest to our mothers that they get that grand bulletin of Rowena Schmidt Carpenter's and read that if they have a feeding problem.

VAN DEMAN:

Good Food Habits for Children? That one, you mean?

HEINEY:

Yes, that's full of very good practical advice.

VAN DEMAN:

Mrs. Carpenter would be glad to hear you say that. And, Mr. Baker, we'll leave you to offer Good Food Habits for Children, as you will.

BAKER:

I'll be glad to do that Miss Van Deman --

Friends of Farm and Home Hour -- This bulletin Miss Van Deman -- and Mrs. Heincy -- were talking about -- Good Food Habits for Children is one any mother will find useful -- it is available free of charge. If you'd like a copy, just write to Ruth Van Deman, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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